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Investigating the Effects That Alcohol Consumption has on the Impulse Buying Behaviors of College Students

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the
Department of Marketing

By

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Under the mentorship of: Dr. Luther (Trey) Denton, Professor, Head of Marketing

Abstract

This paper looks at the relationships between alcohol consumption and the impulse buying behaviors of college students. The first section of the study looks at what categories of products are most commonly purchased whilst each student is under the influence of alcohol. The criteria for classing something as an impulse purchase in this section is that you can't have previously planned on buying the product, and/or you end up spending more than you initially intended, whilst you are under the influence. We found that food, more alcohol, and gifts for others were the top three categories in this section. The next section is comprised of 18 questions which have a possible answer range of 1 through 7. These are used to see how strongly each respondent agrees with each statement made about their behaviors surrounding alcohol and impulsive behaviors. Lastly, the number of drinks that the respondent consumes on average during a week, and also during a night out with friends, is recorded, along with whether they are an active member of a Fraternity or Sorority. The study found that heavy drinkers report more problems of impulsive overspending.

After analyzing and discussing the results of the questions, and the possible relationships between drinking and impulse buying, the paper then looks at possible managerial implications of the information, and the limitations of this study, as well as ideas for future research.

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Introduction

The high levels of alcohol consumption by college students in the United States is a significant public health problem, which directly and indirectly affects the intellectual and social lives of students across America. Drinking has almost become a kind of ritual for many college students, as they see it as an integral part of their overall college career. According to a recent national survey, almost 80% of college students, aged 18-22, drink, and on top of this, 44% of students binge drink on a weekly basis (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism). Binge drinking can be defined as “having four or more drinks for women or five or more drinks for men, within a period of a few hours.” (<https://www.caron.org/understanding-addiction/teen-addiction-abuse/alcohol-underage-drinking/underage-binge-drinking>) This type of drinking can cause many problems, such as; alcohol addiction, severe damage to the liver and kidneys, social disruption and dangerous driving decisions.

As the consumption of alcohol is so high among college students, it is very important to look into what negative and detrimental effects this has on the students themselves. One area that has not received much attention, is how the consumption of alcohol among college students can lead to an increased occurrence of impulsive behaviors, in particular, impulsive buying behaviors. Impulsive buying can be defined as a sudden, compelling, hedonically complex behavior in which the rapidity of an impulsive decision process precludes thoughtful and deliberate consideration of alternative information and choice (Bayley and Nancarrow, 1998; Beatty and Ferrell, 1998). When buying on impulse, individuals make an unintended, unreflective, and immediate purchase, and often feel a calling to buy the product. (Jones et al., 2003; Rook, 1987). The level of self-control that a person has plays a big role in how impulsive they are when it comes to spending money. It is fair to say that impulsive purchasing and one's self-control personality are two sides of the same coin, and that impulse buying is the loss of one's self-control or the surrender to temptation (Baumeister et al., 2002). As there has not been much previous research on the relationship between alcohol consumption and impulse buying, this research hopes to achieve the goal of finding out just how much the level of alcohol use can influence the impulse buying behaviors of college students.

Literature Review

For many businesses and companies, impulse buying from their customers makes up a large amount of their total revenues. In the United States, up to 62% of total supermarket sales by value, and for certain products, as much as 80% of sales by value are impulsive purchases (Strack et al., 2006). These statistics show that a large amount of purchases that are made in the United States are based on impulsive actions. The complexity of impulse buying itself means that it is quite a complicated topic to understand and study, as there are many different factors that can cause and effect it. Some external causes of impulse buying include; time pressure, available money, variety of selection, store environment and the social norms (Khorrami et al., 2015). Whilst these are all important factors to take into account, I believe that the top three are

the environment, social norms and the money available. The environment can make a person feel at ease in their surroundings, and therefore make them more relaxed whilst thinking about spending money. Therefore, the social setting in which a person is shopping is of great importance. Whilst the environment itself is a very important factor, many studies have shown that it is also about who you are shopping with, that can influence your purchasing behaviors. For example, three separate studies have found that people are more likely to exhibit impulse purchase behavior when shopping with an opposite gender companion (Cheng et al., 2013).

Group cohesiveness is often considered to be a factor that affects decision making. (Cheng et al., 2013). Group Cohesiveness can be defined as the extent to which a group is attractive to its members (Forsyth et al., 2000), which is an outcome of the group development process and is often described as a psychological force that binds people together (Keyton & Springston, 1990). It has been found that when people are in a highly cohesive group, it is very likely that their decision-making process will be influenced by their companion's, regardless of the companion's gender (Cheng et al., 2013). This same study also found that in groups with high-cohesiveness, people are less likely to make impulse purchases, as the guilt that this would bring in front of their peers would stop them from acting in this way. This is very related to the idea of social norms and what is considered acceptable behavior in today's society.

Social norms can also play a large part in impulse purchasing in college. Many students want to fit in, and, as a result, they try to mimic or imitate their peers. If they see their fellow students purchasing a certain good, it is often the case that they will automatically purchase the same good without having a second thought. As mentioned before, drinking has almost become a sort of necessary ritual for many college students, and an integral part of their overall experience. When students are in a social setting where everyone is drinking and buying drinks, it becomes very hard not to give into peer pressure and start purchasing your own alcohol as well.

As college students do not typically have a large amount of money, they have to be very careful and clever with where they spend this money and what they spend it on. Being a typically impulsive person is thought to make this a lot harder, but when alcohol is thrown in the mix as well, the decisions students make will be based a lot more off impulse than on careful thought and consideration. This is largely due to the fact that consuming alcohol can negatively affect the frontal lobes of the brain, where decisions are made (Baumeister, Roy F., 1994). Alcohol has also been shown to contribute to failure of behavioral self-control (Baumeister et al. 1994). One of the main explanations for this is that alcohol consumption and intoxication seems to result in people stopping to monitor their own behavior. Drunken people were also found to stop keeping track of their spending, eating, smoking, and drinking itself (Carver & Scheier 1981).

The consumption of alcohol is known to have many short and long-term effects on the human body. Alcohol consumption has been shown to contribute to the failure of self-control in nearly every domain in which people control their behavior (Baumeister et al. 1994). One of the main explanations for this would be that the alcohol that they drink results in intoxication which in turn leads to less monitoring of their own behavior. According to a study conducted by Carver and Scheier in 1981, drunken people stop keeping track of their spending, their comments, their eating and smoking, and even of drinking itself.

There have been many other studies that have linked alcohol consumption to a lack of impulsive control. One such study, titled “Alcohol use and alcohol-related consequences”, published in The Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse states, looks at alcohol’s association with emotional regulation difficulties. One of the main findings was that difficulties with impulse control in college students was positively associated with the frequency of both alcohol use and alcohol related consequences (Dvorak. D., et al. 2014). This study seems to show some solid results that would support the idea of this research paper, that is, that as alcohol consumption increases, the amount of impulsive purchases will also increase.

There have been many studies that lean towards the idea that most people who purchase goods impulsively do regret their actions shortly after. However, recent studies have shown that consumers who have bought products in an impulsive manner do not see this as a mistake, and also do not have any bad feelings towards what they did (Khorrami et al., 2015). The same study, called Rock’s study, found that only 20% of people who engage in impulsive buying behaviors have reported negative feelings concerning their shopping. (Khorrami et al., 2015). This research paper will hope to find out whether or not college students are happy with their impulse purchases, or feel some form of regret in relation to the money that they spent.

Hypothesis

After looking at many different studies on impulsive purchasing and impulsive behaviors, as well as the effects that alcohol has on people’s behaviors, it seems that there could very well be a factor that links the two together. The way that alcohol consumption effects the behavior and impulsive nature of people makes it very likely that it could exaggerate the impulsive buying behaviors of college students. Therefore, the first of two hypotheses for this study is:

Hypothesis 1: “As the number of alcoholic drinks consumed increases, the amount of impulse purchases made will also increase.”

The Greek life culture is famously one for drinking and partying. Although there are many members of Fraternities and Sororities that do not drink alcohol, it is fair to state that the majority do partake in some form of drinking during an average week. With the party atmosphere so prominent in Greek life, the second hypothesis is looking at how many drinks the average Fraternity or Sorority member consumes, compared to other students.

Hypothesis 2: Being a member of a Fraternity or Sorority will result in more alcoholic drinks consumed on average, and more problems associated with impulse purchasing, compared to those who are not a member of said groups.

Methodology

The study included 109 respondents who are all students. 91% of the respondents were Seniors and 9% were Juniors. These students were given 3 extra credit points towards their final grades

in both the Advanced Selling and International Marketing classes. These classes were chosen as they consisted of a large number of students, the majority of whom were above the legal drinking age of 21 years old. The questionnaires were handed out manually at the beginning of class, and the respondents had the option not to participate and also given the option to stop at any time that they wanted. If they were younger than 21 years old, or if they did not drink any alcohol, then they were asked not to participate.

The questionnaire consisted of 33 questions, none of which were open ended. The first section was based on many different categories of products that people would typically purchase on a day to day basis. These categories, in the order in which they were presented on the questionnaire, were; clothing, electronics, food, gambling, tattoos, unplanned trip/vacation, expensive alcohol, music downloads, movie downloads and gifts for others. The respondent was asked to circle “yes” or “no” as to whether or not they had ever purchased anything from one of these categories whilst under the influence of alcohol, that they did not intend to purchase before consuming the drink(s), or in a greater amount than they would have normally purchased. If they circled “yes” to any one of these categories, then they were then asked to circle either “in a store” or “online” to indicate how they purchased this item.

The next section of the questionnaire was comprised of 19 Likert statements that were to be answered based on a 1 to 7 scale. In this scale, 1 would represent the feeling of “strongly disagree”, 4 would represent the feeling of “neutral” and 7 would represent the feeling “strongly agree”. In this way we are able to compare the feelings of each individual and of the group of respondents as a whole with ease. As well as these questions, the respondents were asked what year they are in in college, how many drinks they would consume on average in a week and in a day whilst with a group of friends. Lastly, we wanted to find out whether they were a member of a Fraternity or Sorority, and so provided this question with a simple “yes” or “no” circle answer question.

Below is a copy of the questionnaire that was handed out to participants:

Dear Survey Participant,

You must be 21 or older to participate in this survey.

We are studying the impact of legal alcohol consumption on impulse purchases. Your participation will help us better understand the ethical marketing dimensions related to purchases made while under the influence of alcohol. Your participation is voluntary and you may cease filling out the questionnaire at any time. Your name nor any information that could identify you as an individual will NOT be collected. This study was approved by the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board Case #H18101

Year in school: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

While under the influence of alcohol, one alcoholic beverage or more, have you ever purchased any of the following that you DID NOT INTEND TO PURCHASE *BEFORE* you had the drink or drinks or in an amount GREATER than you would have normally purchased?

Yes	No	Clothing	If yes,	In a Store	Online
Yes	No	Electronics like phones or games	If yes,	In a Store	Online
Yes	No	Food (for yourself or for friends)	If yes,	In a Store	Online
Yes	No	Gambling	If yes,	In a Store	Online
Yes	No	Tattoo	If yes,	In a Store	Online
Yes	No	Unplanned trip/vacation	If yes,	In a Store	Online
Yes	No	Expensive alcohol	If yes,	In a Store	Online
Yes	No	Music downloads	If yes,	In a Store	Online
Yes	No	Movie downloads	If yes,	In a Store	Online
Yes	No	Gifts for others	If yes,	In a Store	Online

Please circle one number in the following questions. 1 being “strongly disagree”, 4 being “neutral”, and 7 being “strongly agree”.

1=STRONGLY DISAGREE 4=NEUTRAL 7=STRONGLY AGREE

I am an impulsive person.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When I go shopping, I buy things that I had not intended to purchase.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When I see something that really interests me, I buy it without considering the consequences.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Buying unplanned items make me feel happy.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I avoid buying things that are not on my shopping list.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When I am NOT drinking, I am a regular online purchaser of goods.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Online purchasing, and especially “one-click” options, is so easy that it leads people to buy things they might not need.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When I am drinking, I sometimes buy things (like tickets, or more drinks, or food, or a tee shirt), in order to match things my friends who are with me are also buying.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When drinking, I sometimes don’t care about my spending budget.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I have purchased items when I have been drinking that I later regret buying.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Since I have been old enough to legally drink, I have frequently over-spent as a result of buying things while drinking.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Since I have been old enough to legally drink, I have sometimes run up my credit card tab due to purchases made while drinking.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When drinking, I am more likely to buy things I do not need.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When drinking, I am more likely to buy more expensive items than my budget can afford.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I tend to buy more online music when I have had a few drinks.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Sometimes I spend more when I am drinking because I do not want the fun to stop.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I like to drink.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I consider myself a responsible drinker.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I like to party.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

During a typical week, how many alcoholic drinks would you consume?

0 1-4 5-9 10-14 15+

On a night out with a group of friends, how many alcoholic drinks would you typically consume?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8+

Active member of fraternity or sorority Yes No

Thank you for your participation.

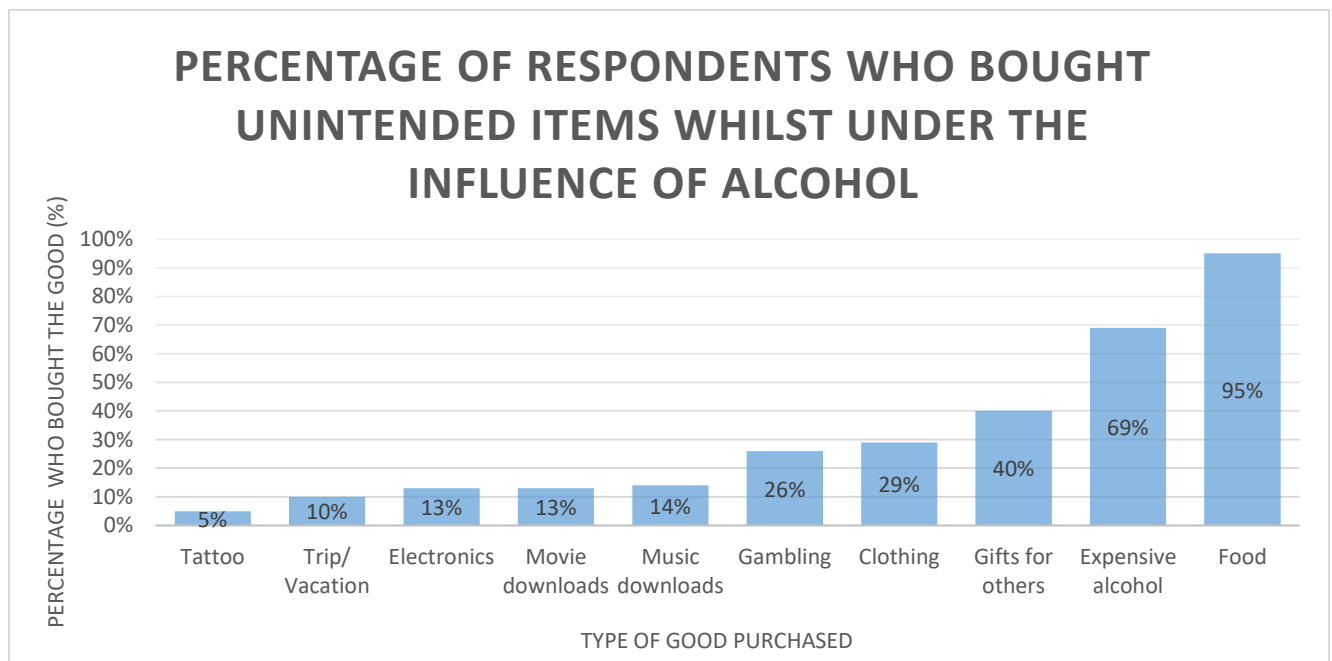
Christian Kerrigan Honors Student in Marketing

Results

The first section of the questionnaire was sorted into yes and no answers in regards to what categories of products the respondent bought in the past whilst under the influence of alcohol. The minimum number of categories that a respondent chose was 0, and the maximum was 8. The mean number of “yes” answers was 3.11. This shows that, on average, the students would purchase products on impulse from three of the given categories.

The next step was to find out how the categories ranked in most purchased to least purchased. As the bar chart shows, food was by far the most common category of product, as 95% of respondents claimed to have spent money in an impulsive manner on this category whilst under the influence of alcohol.

Graph 1: Percentage of respondents who bought unintended items whilst under the influence of alcohol.



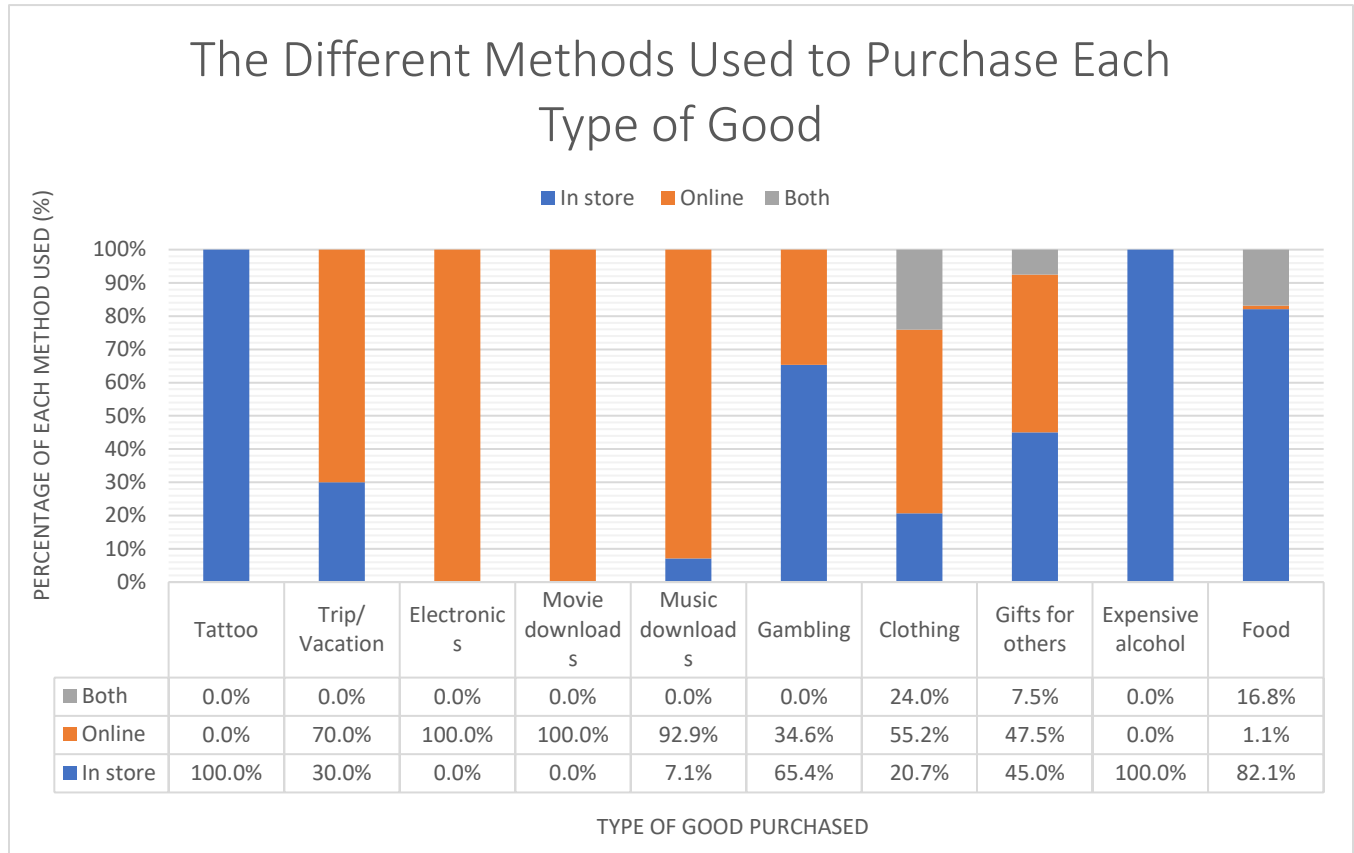
The second highest category in this chart is expensive alcohol. This is backing up a point made earlier in this study which states that consuming alcohol can cause a person to think less about spending money, smoking and buying more alcohol.

Tattoos were bought the least, as this has much larger implications than the other categories, and can have much higher risks associated with it. Spontaneous trips and vacations also cost a very large sum of money, and so it is more likely that people, especially students, would spend more time thinking about spending that large amount of money before actually acting upon the impulse.

The next step was to find out what methods were used to purchase the products from all these different categories. The respondents could either circle “in-store”, “online” or put a circle

around both of these to indicate that they use both methods. The results are shown in the stacked bar graph below.

Graph 2: The occurrence of different methods used to purchase each type of good



As the graph shows, there is quite a variety of responses, with certain categories being purchased mainly in one way or method. For example, both electronics and movie downloads were all purchased through online platforms, whereas expensive alcohol and tattoos were purchased solely from in-store locations. It is also interesting to see that clothing is mainly bought online, but also has a reasonably large number of in-store purchases, at 20.7%. Online gambling has been growing dramatically in the last few years, and provides an easy way for people to get their gambling fix on a night out. This is shown in the chart, as 34.6% of gambling purchase were done through online platforms.

Below are tables which show the means and standard deviations of the answers to the second section of the questionnaire, question 12 to question 30.

Table 1: The means and standard deviations of all responses to questions in the first half of the questionnaire.

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I consider myself a responsible drinker.	5.85	1.28
Online purchasing, especially “one-click” options, is so easy that it leads people to buy things that they might not need.	5.43	1.5
I like to drink.	5.37	1.45
I like to party.	5.27	1.53
When drinking, I sometimes don’t care about my spending budget.	4.95	1.77
When I go shopping, I buy things that I had not intended to purchase.	4.75	1.65
When I am NOT drinking, I am a regular purchaser of online goods.	4.72	1.76
I have purchased items when I have been drinking that I later regret buying.	4.6	1.96
Sometimes I spend more when I am drinking because I do not want the fun to stop.	4.56	1.71
Buying unplanned items makes me feel happy.	4.34	1.6
When drinking, I am more likely to buy things I do not need.	4.34	1.77
I am an impulsive person.	4.22	1.59
When drinking, I sometimes buy things in order to match things that my friends who are with me are also buying.	3.96	1.95
When drinking, I am more likely to buy more expensive items than my budget can afford.	3.92	1.86
Since I have been old enough to legally drink, I have frequently over-spent as a result of buying things whilst drinking.	3.87	1.82
I avoid buying things that are not on my shopping list.	3.75	1.43
When I see something that really interests me, I buy it without considering the consequences.	3.72	1.74
Since I have been old enough to legally drink, I have sometimes run up my credit card tab due to purchases made while drinking.	3.65	2.16
I tend to buy more online music when I have had a few drinks.	2.01	1.4

Table 2: T-Test results comparing the mean responses from light drinkers to those of heavy drinkers

Statement	Mean Light Drink	Mean Heavy Drink	P-Value	Level of Significance. (*.05, **.10)
I am an Impulsive Person.	4.27	4.55	0.09	**
When shopping, buy things that had not intended to purchase.	4.78	4.88	0.31	
See something interesting, buy it without consideration.	3.60	3.95	0.22	
Buying unplanned items makes me happy.	4.33	4.48	0.28	
I avoid buying things that are not on my list.	3.80	3.62	0.47	
When NOT drinking, regular online purchaser of goods.	4.83	4.87	0.45	
Online purchasing, "one click" options, is so easy, leads people to buy things they might not need.	5.43	5.43	0.50	
When I am drinking, sometimes buy things to match my friend's purchases.	3.83	4.28	0.08	**
When drinking, sometimes don't care about my spending budget.	4.88	5.33	0.05	*
I have purchased items when I have been drinking that I later regret buying.	4.57	5.11	0.03	*
Since I have been old enough to legally drink, I have frequently over-spent due to buying things whilst drinking.	3.76	4.33	0.03	*
Since being old enough to drink, sometimes run up credit card due to tab purchases made whilst drinking.	3.51	4.30	0.01	*
When drinking, I am more likely to buy things I do not need.	4.23	4.83	0.01	*
When drinking, I am more likely do buy more expensive items than my budget can afford.	3.70	4.38	0.01	*
I tend to buy more online music when I've had a few drinks.	2.06	2.13	0.38	
Sometimes I spend more when I am drinking because I do not want the fun to stop.	4.42	5	0.01	*
I like to drink.	5.37	5.88	0.01	*
I am a responsible drinker.	5.83	5.75	0.36	
I like to party.	5.39	5.97	0.00	*

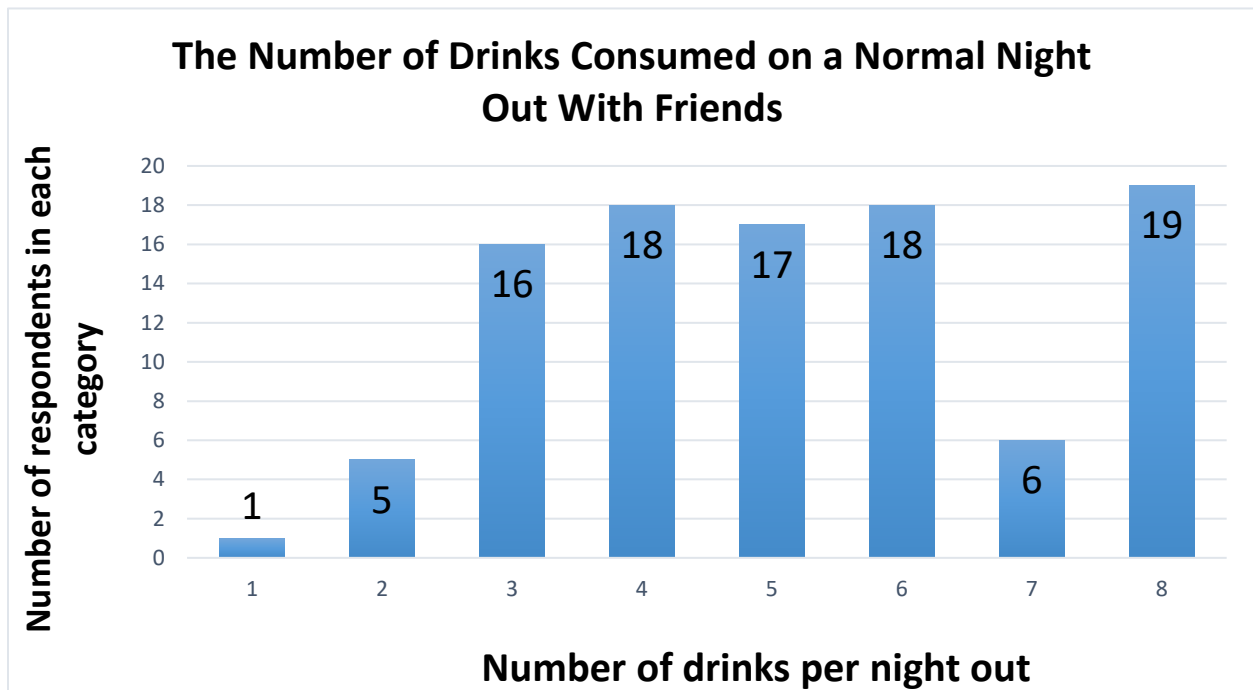
Table 3: T-Test results comparing the mean responses from students involved in Greek life to those not

Statement	Involved in Greek Life	Not Involved in Greek Life	P-Value	Level of Significance. (*.05, **.10)
I am an Impulsive Person.	4.22	4.44	0.27	
When shopping, buy things that had not intended to purchase.	4.75	4.68	0.43	
See something interesting, buy it without consideration.	3.72	3.56	0.31	
Buying unplanned items makes me happy.	4.34	4.48	0.33	
I avoid buying things that are not on my list.	3.75	3.56	0.27	
When NOT drinking, regular online purchaser of goods.	4.72	5.08	0.17	
Online purchasing, “one click” options, is so easy, leads people to buy things they might not need.	5.43	5.36	0.42	
When I am drinking, sometimes buy things to match my friend’s purchases.	3.96	3.52	0.15	
When drinking, sometimes don’t care about my spending budget.	4.95	4.64	0.24	
I have purchased items when I have been drinking that I later regret buying.	4.60	3.92	0.08	**
Since I have been old enough to legally drink, I have frequently over-spent due to buying things whilst drinking.	3.87	3.32	0.10	
Since being old enough to drink, sometimes run up credit card due to tab purchases made whilst drinking.	3.65	3.04	0.10	
When drinking, I am more likely to buy things I do not need.	4.34	4.08	0.27	
When drinking, I am more likely do buy more expensive items than my budget can afford.	3.92	3.48	0.14	
I tend to buy more online music when I’ve had a few drinks.	2.01	1.68	0.12	
Sometimes I spend more when I am drinking because I do not want the fun to stop.	4.56	4.16	0.18	
I like to drink.	5.37	5.44	0.40	
I am a responsible drinker.	5.85	6.16	0.08	**
I like to party.	5.27	4.92	0.17	

After this second section of questions, the respondents were asked how many drinks they have on any average week, as well as on any average night out. The scale that was used for “drinks consumed per week” was; 1-4, 5-9, 10-14, and 15+. There were 44 students who drank 1-4 drinks per week on average, 26 that drank 5-9, 16 that drank 10-14, and 14 that drank 15 or more.

Below is a small table showing the number of people that categorize themselves into each group for the “typical number of drinks consumed whilst on a night out with friends”.

Number of drinks consumed on a night out	Number of respondents who fit that category
1	1
2	5
3	16
4	18
5	17
6	18
7	6
8	19



Discussion & Business Implications

The results to the first section of the questionnaire are quite concrete in what they represent. It was very interesting to see that every category had at least one answer of “yes” to whether or not it was purchased in an impulsive manner, whilst under the influence of alcohol.

The vast majority of the respondents, 95% to be exact, answered “yes” to whether they purchase food on a night out, without having the previous intention to do so. I was expecting this to be the case, as in a town like Statesboro Georgia, there are many different fast food restaurants that are open until at least midnight. This gives people who have been drinking the ability to get any sort of food that they want with great ease. The reason behind this number being so high is most likely to do with the fact that people do get more hungry whilst drinking alcohol, and are willing to fulfill their hunger in any way that they can, no matter the cost.

The development and growth of the online food ordering apps has also made it easier for people to order food when they are unable to drive somewhere due to alcohol consumption. What does seem slightly surprising is the fact that only 1.1% of respondents claim to purchase food solely online whilst they are drinking. I believe that this figure would be much higher in areas where fast food restaurants are further away from each other, and where there are more App based services available, such as UberEats.

A surprising result from graph 1 was that the third highest category that was purchased whilst under the influence of alcohol was ‘gifts for others’. Although we did not specify exactly who these gifts were for, or even what the gifts were, it is clear to see that people are generous towards others whilst drinking. This could be because of increased emotions at the time and may also depend on who they are with at the time. It is more likely that a person will spend money on their significant other or close friends whilst they are drinking, so that they are portrayed in a good light. Social pressures of being among a group of people whilst drinking may also cause a person to think that they must purchase items for others, so as to fit in and be accepted.

As far as online advertising and marketing goes, from these results it seems that companies who sell electronic goods, music downloads, and/or movie downloads, should mainly be focused on their online sales. It is extremely easy to go on the internet on your smartphone or computer and purchase a song or movie that you like, and this becomes even more prevalent when you are drinking.

It seems that there is a strong correlation between alcohol consumption and impulse buying behaviors, as, on average, respondents claimed to have spent money on 3 categories of products whilst under the influence of alcohol. Therefore, it could be a good idea for marketing managers to take advantage of this, and to offer promotions and other sales events around areas or moments in time when people, especially college students, will be drinking. This could be as easy as promoting your chicken shop outside of a local college bar. As the students go in and drink, they will become hungry and, according to this research, be more likely to go and buy your product if they can see your advertisement. There are of course some morality and ethicality questions that are raised with this topic, as many might think that taking advantage of people’s

lack of self-awareness and caution when they are drinking in order to make a profit on selling your goods would be unethical.

The second section of the questionnaire allowed the respondent to give a slightly more in-depth answer in regards to how they act whilst they are under the influence of alcohol, with the 1-7 scales. For a lot of the questions, the mean answer was 4 (neutral) or below. However, there were certain questions which had answers means that were as high as 5.85, which shows an overall strong agreement with the statement.

One of the most interesting findings was that when responding to the question about being a responsible drinker, the group of heavy drinkers had a mean of 5.75 and the group of light drinkers had a mean of 5.83. This shows that there is absolutely no significant difference between the two groups in terms of how responsible they think they are with alcohol. This is quite worrying, as the 8+ category was the most common response, with 19 out the 100 respondents having this as their answer. This shows that there is a big difference between what the students think they are drinking and what they actually drink on a night out.

Overall, when comparing the light drinkers to the heavy drinkers, on almost every question the mean for the heavy drinkers was higher than that of the light drinkers group. This shows that heavy drinkers are more likely to act impulsively when drinking, and are more likely to spend more money when doing so as well. Therefore, we can say that these results support our first hypothesis, which states that “As the number of alcoholic drinks consumed each week increases, the amount of impulse purchases made will also increase.”

Question number 18, stated that “Online purchasing, especially ‘one-click’ options, is so easy that it leads people to buy things they might not need”. The mean answer to this question was 5.43, which shows that the majority of people were leaning more towards the fact that having an online option makes it more likely that they would spend money and buy on impulse. This is another statistic that shows how important it is for companies to expand their online markets and make it as easy as possible for consumers to buy their products. Online purchasing and one-click options are extremely simple processes, and do not take much effort from the side of the buyer, which therefore makes this style of shopping extremely desirable to drunken people.

The second table in the results section shows the results of the T-Test comparing those respondents who are in Fraternities and Sororities to those who are not. Although there are two results which are slightly statistically significant, overall, it is clear to see that whether you are involved in Greek Life or not has no bearing on the amount of alcohol you consume, or how impulsively you act whilst under the influence of alcohol. Therefore, we can conclude that the second hypothesis, “Being a member of a Fraternity or Sorority will result in more alcoholic drinks consumed on average, compared to those who are not a member of said groups.”, is not supported by the findings of this study. This is quite a positive result, as the stigma attached to Greek life is often one of partying and alcohol, which these results show is not the case.

Limitations

There were many different limitations to this study. The first of which was that we were only able to obtain a sample from two different class types, international marketing and advanced sales. The students in these majors may have very similar feelings about alcohol and shopping in general, and could be more open to spending money than other students in the University. In this way, the sample that was selected may not represent the entire student body of the University accurately.

A second limitation of this study was that the questionnaire had to be limited in size so that the students would not get bored whilst taking it, and also so that it would not take up too much time from their usual class session. This meant that there were only a certain amount of questions that could be asked, and there were many others that had to be left out. These other questions may have given us a better idea about the relationship between alcohol consumption and impulse buying behaviors.

It was also extremely hard to know whether or not the students understood exactly what impulse buying was, and whether they classify as impulse buyers or not. For future studies, it would be a good idea to have someone explain to the participants in person, and perhaps give them an example of an impulse purchase, so that they can get a clearer picture.

The study did not include data asking respondents to list gender or income. Future studies should discriminate & compare based on these variables.

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